4; Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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until a sufficient number of their relatives have died. 765
Along the river there are several ghats where the relative who has brought the bones offers earth and tooth-brushes to the departed and to Pilchu Haram and Burhi after throwing the bones, etc., into the river. He goes into deep water and facing East dives and while under the water he lets the bones go. The last function is known as Chandan. On the floor of the room where the man breathed his last the eldest son puts a quantity of adwa rice on a plate of Sal-leaves. Then a he-goat is cut by holding the neck over this rice and the blood which falls is mixed with the rice properly. All the members of the house take a little of it taking the name of the departed. Then a great feast is given by the sons of the departed in which all the relatives and villagers join. When this is over the mourners resume their ordinary life, but till then they can neither sacrifice nor use vermilion, nor can marriage or any other ceremony take place in the village.

When a little child or a pregnant woman dies the 766 •
Santals bury the corpse. After the death the female relatives and villagers, taking a little mustard oil and turmeric (powdered), rub it on dead body covering it with a new cloth, all utensils and other objects of the departed being carried to the burial ground. When they reach the destination they place the bedstead in such a way that the head of the dead body points towards the South. A branch of the Mowah tree is put on the bed near the head. The pit is made North to South. All those who accompany the dead do not forget to take a pot with water from the house of the departed and a rupee. They then, taking a little water from the

4; Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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766 pit and the rupee touch the hands, feet and mouth of the corpse. They place the body within the grave ; all those who are present there take a little earth and put it on the mouth of the dead uttering the following words :

[539]

Ma taba khan tahi khanad ala khanem bagarana
Onata nsa sanam ko hasala amam kana
Alaho Jaman bis badala tahen ma
(English translation)

You have been separated from us that is why I am giving a little earth to you. Please see that we may remain in good health.

Then they cover the grave with earth. The relatives take a little earth from the burial ground and a nail from the dead body, they then throw these into the Damodar river. In the case of the pregnant woman they insert an iron nail in the sole of the foot. The reason of this is that Churinbhut may not come out from the grave.

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CHAPTER 8

THE WORLD INVISIBLE—(2)

776 THE tribal *boŋgas* are the allies of the Santals in the struggle against adverse circumstances and untoward happenings, even though their influence is exercised mostly in a negative manner. Common interest as well as sentiment and tradition keep the human and the spirit partners together. There are, however, 775 other kinds of spirits with whom society through its accredited [171] representatives has no dealings. The belief in these latter spirits, the spirits of the malevolent dead and demons, is one which the Santals share with the peasantry of North India.[1] While there is much in the *boŋga* cult that is distinctive of the Santals, they seem to have absorbed the general beliefs of the region regarding spirits that are not worshipped but feared. They use the same terms as their neighbours and speak of *bhut*, *pret* and *curin*. These are the spirits of dead persons who have either died in some abnormal way or whose funeral ceremonies have not been completed. One Santal who was asked to describe the difference between the terms *bhut* and *boŋga* pondered his reply for a minute before saying: "Until the bones have been taken to the river all dead men are *bhuts*. These waylay people in the beds of streams. We fear them, and we do not look after them (*lit.* we do not feed them). We do look after the *boŋgas*, and they work for us." Santals do not seem to have made up their minds whether suicides automatically become malevolent spirits or not. Some think that they do, while one Santal affirmed that as death was rarely ascribed to natural causes suicide was not peculiar, being merely one of the ways in which evil influences worked on men's minds. Childless men become ghosts, and this belief is due to the fact that a son is desired who will light the funeral pyre. The *curin* form a special class of female ghosts with terrifying appearance. They are the spirits of women who died in childbirth, or while they were pregnant and after their child had quickened in the womb, and whose corpses had then not been disposed of in the right manner. Among the Santals, as among many other Indian [766] peoples, the husband is required to cut open his wife's body [171] and remove the foetus from it so that it may be buried separately. *Curin* haunt the beds of streams, where they lie in

[1] William Crooke, *Religion and Folklore of Northern India*, Oxford University Press, 1926, Ch. VII.

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that the girl had died. Evidence showed that she had that morning taken poison in the form of oleander seeds, which furnish an easy means of taking poison. Their efforts were now directed towards the necessity for deciding how to report her death. In every village there is a *chowkidar*, or village policeman, appointed by the government, one of his duties being to report births and deaths. The villagers solemnly debated with him whether they should report the truth and trust to the possibility of bribing the *daroga*, or police inspector, in order to escape further inquiry, but they decided in the end to suppress the truth and save trouble. The girl was buried deep in the forest without ceremony, and her death was later reported as being due to fever. The council then decided that they would inflict the traditional penalty for adultery on her paramour. This is twofold. Images of the two guilty persons are made and carried through the village; and, in addition, heavy stones are attached to the genitals of the man, who is then made to walk through the village. In this case he took the remedy into his own hands by summarily leaving the village, to which he did not return till the lapse of several months had served to cool the general indignation.

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CHAPTER 13

DEATH

761 152 It is far easier to describe the actions of the Santals in the face of death than to reduce their beliefs concerning death and the destiny of man's soul to any system. Under the stress of bereavement the behaviour of the men is stoical, in somewhat marked contrast to the behaviour of the majority of the peoples among whom they live. The women, however, give full vent to the expression of their grief and voice their lamentations in 764 words that are poetical in form and content. As soon as a death has occurred, preparations are made for the burning. Cremation is the almost universal rule, although there are certain signi- 766 ficant exceptions. Children who die before puberty are buried with little ceremony in shallow graves on the edge of the forest, and though thorns are placed over the grave to protect the body from wild animals, such graves are often disturbed. Men and women who have died from certain diseases are buried in the same manner, a fact that accounts for the often unsavoury condition of the patch of jungle that adjoins the compound of the Mission Hospital at Sarenga. This is particularly true of those [164] who die from tuberculosis, which is known to the Santals as *khok' ajar*, or "cough fever", and leprosy, which is called the "great disease". When deaths occur in the village from these causes or from some other infectious disease such as smallpox, the living avoid contact with the dead bodies as far as possible. The body of the dead person is fastened to a rude stretcher made with *sarjom* saplings, and the stretcher is then yoked to a pair of bulls which drag it out of the village. There the body is left after a token burial with a few handfuls of earth, and the task of corpse 764 disposal is left to the vultures and jackals. In some villages [184] burial is the custom because of the difficulty of obtaining sufficient firewood.

[624] In the usual course of events the *godet'* goes through the village calling on every house to contribute its share of the wood for the burning. From each house one of the men takes a stick for the burning to the bereaved home, while one of the women takes along a small amount of oil and turmeric for anointing the body, and, if the dead person be a married woman, some vermilion in addition. When all have gathered, the corpse is washed and rubbed all over with the oil and turmeric; in the case of a married woman fresh vermilion is put on her forehead and in